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NIO # 504-74



Office of the Director of Central Intelligence

14 March 1974

Vice Admiral Vincent P. de Poix, USN
Director
Defense Intelligence Agency

Dear Vince:

I thought it might be useful to set down in this personal, private note (intended for your eyes alone) some of my thoughts on national intelligence -- particularly National Intelligence Estimates -- to explain my approach to several of the matters we have recently been discussing and, particularly, to try to separate semantics from substance. I have checked these thoughts carefully with Bill Colby and, hence, know he and I are of similar mind. From several of our own conversations -- particularly the bidding review we had in my old office with [] and [] participating -- I believe you and I are operating on essentially the same wave length. If this is so (as I hope is the case), our recent differences are indeed largely semantic. If we should have any basic differences of outlook (which I think and hope is not the case), I would like to discuss them with you. Any differences we cannot resolve between ourselves would have to be put before Bill, but I do not think any differences of that kind or degree actually exist.

The U.S. Intelligence Community, as you well know, is a curious structure fashioned more by the dictates of pragmatic compromise than tidy logic in a way that betrays the Anglo-Saxon political heritage of its creators. Its head is a Director of Central Intelligence, with enormous personal responsibilities unaccompanied by line authority over any but one of this Community's major components. He, personally, is the President's principal intelligence officer and Chairman of the USIB. He is accountable

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to the President and the National Security Council for the entire Community's performance, but has direct command control over only one of its member agencies, the CIA. His responsibilities -- and their complexities -- become sharply focussed in the sphere of national intelligence production, especially in matters relating to National Intelligence Estimates.

On the one hand, an NIE (or SNIE) is the DCI's paper. It is an official document for which he is personally responsible and which he personally submits to its policy-level recipients. It, therefore, must reflect his personal views (or views he is willing personally to endorse) and must be a document over which he or his own representatives have control at all stages of its production. On the other hand, the DCI has a concomitant obligation to ensure that national intelligence products, especially National Intelligence Estimates, fairly and accurately reflect the views of the entire Community, particularly views that differ or dissent from a position or line of argument the DCI is endorsing.

Perhaps more than any of his predecessors as DCI, Bill Colby takes both of these sets of responsibilities personally -- and literally. He takes very seriously his personal responsibility for and commitment to the argument, evidence and conclusions presented in National Intelligence Estimates. He takes equally seriously, and personally, his obligation to ensure that contrary views get not only a fair hearing but also a fair airing. Related to these objectives are several others deemed of central importance to this DCI. He is determined to do everything he can to knit the Community together as a Community, to make it function as a whole greater than the sum of its disparate component parts in support of the Presidency, the NSC and those whom the military term "the national command authorities" that the Intelligence Community was established to serve. In this process, he wants to do everything possible to ensure that policy-level consumers of national intelligence get the best products the full range of the Community's resources can produce: products which reflect institutional views (and protect legitimate institutional equities) but simultaneously offer the best analysis available -- including clear presentation of divergent expert opinion -- without regard to, or inhibitions imposed by, the institutional origins of that analysis or institutional affiliations of the analysts who provide it.

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It was Bill Colby's concern with the importance of the estimative process -- a concern shared and often discussed with his predecessor as DCI, now the Secretary of Defense -- that led Jim Schlesinger to initiate and Bill to complete a hard re-examination and restructuring of the mechanism through which National Estimates are produced: abolishing the Board and Office of National Estimates and assigning its responsibilities to the evolving concept of National Intelligence Officers. The former system/mechanism had certain virtues which the DCI obviously wants to preserve, but also had certain defects which the new system/mechanism is intended to rectify.

The former system/mechanism had two essential component parts: the Board of National Estimates and the Office of National Estimates, which encompassed the full-time, professional staff that supported the Board. Members of the Board supervised and chaired the production of all Estimates; members of the ONE Staff did (virtually) all of the drafting. This system/mechanism produced a number of first-class products over a span of more than two decades (no small accomplishment). It had many virtues, far from the least of these being efficiency and a reasonably uniform output of generally high quality. It also had the merit of being a system and mechanism which kept the entire process -- and, hence, the resultant output -- under the control of the DCI or officers representing him and working full time under his command jurisdiction.

This system and mechanism, of course, also had certain defects -- some substantive, some actually cosmetic but nonetheless of symbolic significance yielding adverse consequences. The ONE Staff had a certain human tendency toward parochialism and even when it was not in fact being parochial, its very structure and work style often made it appear to be parochial. Its members were all employed by (or detailed to) one agency, housed in one agency and worked full time in one agency. Furthermore, though on individual Estimates ONE solicited and received contributions from throughout the Community -- contributions whose production frequently involved many man hours of work by other Community components -- the end products placed before the USIB representatives and the USIB itself often looked as if few of these contributions had been used, i.e., there was often little (if any) language in the Estimate drafts or final USIB-approved/DCI-submitted Estimates that those from other Community components that had worked on these contributions

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recognized as coming from their pens or typewriters. In many instances the reasons for this were neither sinister nor illegitimate: often the contributions were not adaptable to the language or organizational structure of the Estimate in question and under the pressure of tight deadlines it was easier (or even necessary) for the ONE Staff drafter, drawing on the ideas of the inputs, to write his own prose from start to finish. Still -- as we both well know -- the old system engendered the widespread belief that Community participation in the preparation of Estimates was a pious fiction and that Estimates were in fact the product of an incestuous closed corporation which jealously protected its parochial monopoly. Though in fact this was not true, the belief was not entirely without foundation. Furthermore, well founded or not, it existed; and its existence did nothing to foster a spirit of Community cooperation or sense of shared Community participation in a joint venture conducted in the national interest.

There were also two other problems inherent in the old system. First, though the ONE Staff was extremely talented (and some of its members outstandingly so), there were many talented officers throughout the Community who were (obviously) not members of the ONE Staff -- and the former system made it difficult for such officers to make direct, personal inputs to National Estimates. Second, the whole ONE approach was keyed to coordination in the sense of achieving consensus. This put a primacy on finding "agreed" language. In practice this often meant a lowest common denominator which muted, masked or muffled areas of legitimate disagreement, and made crispness or bite virtually unattainable. Where dissents were registered against text that was itself frequently opaque, these dissents were sometimes almost unintelligible (hence, meaningless) to all save their authors and/or those who had personally participated in the coordination sessions that generated them. Not surprisingly, the end products of this process were often viewed as far from optimally useful or helpful by the policy-level readers for whom they were theoretically written.

Bill Colby's new approach to producing National Estimates, based on the NIO concept, represents an endeavor to keep the essential elements of the old system -- including retention of DCI control over what, in the final analysis, must be the DCI's Estimates -- while rectifying as many as possible of its inherent flaws and defects. The new system clearly pays a price in terms

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of tidiness (which many instinctively see as an index of efficiency) and uniformity. These are prices considered well worth paying in pursuit of the following objectives which the new system was deliberately designed to achieve:

- 1) A far greater degree of true Community participation in the estimative process, engendering a concomitant sense of joint venture participation throughout the Community.
- 2) The utilization of all available collection resources and all available analytic talent and insight from throughout the whole Community.
- 3) The surfacing and clear presentation of divergent views and opinions where there are honest differences among knowledgeable experts.

The last point is of particular importance, but has its own special aspects and complexities. For one thing, a sense of balance and proportion has to be maintained lest in avoiding one kind of error we commit another equally bad. The DCI does not and clearly cannot expect the busy readers of Estimates to do the work the Intelligence Community ought to do for them; hence, Estimates have to be much more than a compendium of alternative lines of analysis or divergent interpretations of available evidence. Nonetheless, the DCI does have an obligation -- about which this DCI has very strong feelings -- to ensure that significant disagreements on matters of consequence are not muted, muffled or masked. If there are such disagreements within the Intelligence Community, the policy level consumers of national intelligence not only have a right (and need) to know about them, but will be better served if such divergent views are clearly spelled out in a form that makes them intelligible and gives an understandable indication of the evidence, analysis and reasoning on which they are respectively based.

Another germane consideration, however, is that some of the most significant splits of informed opinion within the Intelligence Community do not follow institutional lines. There can be and often are major, enlightening differences of informed opinion within as well as between component members of the Intelligence Community. This fact faced this DCI, and his predecessor, with

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the conundrum of devising a mechanism that would permit the full range of knowledgeable opinion to be included in national intelligence products, including National Estimates, without encroaching improperly on the jurisdictional authority or internal command structure of the separate organizations which collectively comprise the Intelligence Community.

The Schlesinger/Colby solution to this problem is a process that has two different phases: a drafting phase and a coordination phase, the latter being conducted first at the representatives' level and then at USIB itself. This process is built around the concept that the drafting phase is "non-institutional," hence, in it no institutional stock is being voted and no institutional commitments are being made. It is in the coordination phase that institutional opinions are voiced, institutional equities protected and -- when appropriate -- institutional stock voted.

Essential to the success of this process in the case of any given Estimate is the proper, effective discharge of three critical roles: that of the NIO, that of the Chairman, and that of the drafter(s). The NIO assigned responsibility for an Estimate by the DCI is responsible for all aspects of it to the DCI. The Chairman is responsible to the NIO and acts on his behalf (as the NIO is acting on the DCI's behalf) to ensure that the process works and that the final Estimate is indeed the best possible Community product, reflecting the best evidence collectible by and best analysis of all elements of the Community. Under the NIO's aegis, the Chairman (naturally) works closely with the drafter, runs the meetings, ensures that all divergent views are fairly heard and all significant ones properly reflected and -- during the coordination process -- that all institutional equities and concerns get proper protection and registration. The Chairman can come from any member component of the Community. On some Estimates, however -- particularly ones of special significance or importance -- the NIO in question will personally serve as the Chairman, combining both of those functions in one individual.

Given the fact that an Estimate is basically a piece of English prose, the role of the drafter in its preparation is clearly crucial. He or she can also come from any component of the Community. (I will stick to the singular for clarity, though obviously Estimates of great length and complexity will be drafted by a team rather than one person.) It is the drafter's

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job to synthesize the evidence, analysis and reasoning of all Community elements (including his own views where appropriate) into a single, coherent, crisp, intelligible prose document that distills and properly reflects the Community's best analysis, reasoning and judgments -- laying out divergencies and disagreements where it is germane or appropriate to do so. In this task, he works closely with his Chairman, operating under the latter's aegis and supervision.

As indicated above, we have scrapped the concept of a single corps of full-time drafters combined in one office housed in the CIA. Hence, we have abolished the former ONE Staff. Doing so, frankly, is an experiment conducted in the belief (or devout hope) that this new system will truly widen the range of Community participation, make possible the utilization of talent throughout the Community and produce better National Estimates, even at the acknowledged cost of some bureaucratic untidiness. This experiment will fail and we will have to go back to some variant of the old system if the new approach is not understood and supported throughout the Community.

The greatest area of bureaucratic untidiness -- and the area in which it is essential to avoid being boxed in by old concepts if the new system is to work -- is that involving the role and responsibilities of the drafter. As indicated, he or she can come from any element of the Community (thus breaking what was formerly perceived as a "CIA monopoly" in drafting Estimates). His assumption of these duties obviously requires the endorsement and approval of his line superiors within his parent Community component. Indeed, to minimize the irritation of institutional sensibilities particularly during the early phases of this new process, it will be better for components asked to provide draft(er)s to select themselves the officers who will be asked to do the work. (Over time, shared experience will produce a pragmatic, de facto talent inventory that will yield obvious candidates for many such choices.) For legitimate practical reasons cogently outlined by Sam Wilson when we all discussed this matter, those preparing an Estimate draft should normally remain physically in their own offices, surrounded by the files, secretaries and typewriters to which they are accustomed and available for spot call by their organizational superiors when the latter are faced with spot needs they have to meet.

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The Community component from which the drafter comes will obviously and inevitably have considerable influence over the shape, scope and tone of the draft. No Community component, or head thereof, is going to select a drafter unless it/he has complete confidence in that drafter's professionalism, expertise and general soundness. In the practical, real world no Community component, or head thereof, is going to designate a maverick iconoclast to draft a National Estimate; i.e., the drafter chosen will almost certainly be one whose general outlook and orientation is congruent with that of his component and its head.

Here, however, we come to a crucial distinction -- one you and I have discussed several times -- which can be terminological or can be substantively critical (depending on how it is construed): namely, whether the Community component in question is providing a drafter or a draft. The key element here is understanding and acceptance (or rejection) of the essential concept that an Estimate draft, under the new system, is non-institutional. It has to reflect, fairly and in balanced proportion, the best evidence and analysis available throughout the Community. In this sense it is not a "product" of the component to which the officer who wrote it belongs and, above all, it is not that component's property. That component gets at least two institutional cracks at the draft before it gets issued as an Estimate: once during the coordinating session(s) in which that component's representatives participate and once again at the USIB table where the component head gets a chance to discuss it personally and to make a final decision on how he wants to vote his component's institutional stock. The draft -- and the Estimate -- "belong" to the DCI, whose authority during the drafting/coordination phase is delegated to and exercised by the NIO and under him (when he does not personally assume this role), the Estimate's Chairman.

Under this system, the drafter's Community component -- as an institution -- does not necessarily endorse, is not committed to and is certainly not bound by the draft. During the coordination process, that component's institutional representatives are entirely free to object or dissent to any or all portions of the draft (which their colleague(s) will have written) and the component's head is entirely free to register any objections or dissents he cares to register at the USIB table. Thus, if the system works, you could easily have a situation in which a USIB member formally dissents from an Estimate (or portions thereof) drafted by his own

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line subordinates. As you know, this actually happened in the Argentina Estimate, which was drafted by CIA officers to whose conclusions and judgments the CIA member of USIB formally and officially dissented. (Actually, I was delighted that this precedent-setting example was one which wound up with CIA dissenting from a DCI Estimate which had been drafted by CIA officers.)

This new system, designed by Messrs. Schlesinger and Colby to serve everybody's interests (including the country's), obviously represents change. Change is a thing that some find it hard to understand and/or instinctively resist. Indeed, I had to fight off bear raids on the first two Estimates done under the new system. In that case, the bear raids -- both of them -- came from Ed Proctor, who tried to translate the assignment of drafting responsibilities for both of those Estimates to CIA (DDI) into institutional capture of and control over the drafts and, hence, (in practical effect) the Estimates. At my request, Bill quietly eased Ed back into line with a minimum of fuss and no public controversy or embarrassment. It was this incident, by the way, which made me resolve that in the future I would be careful to ask, or have Bill ask, Community components to provide drafters, not drafts.

As I have said in our conversations, I am indifferent to terminological labels so long as there is understanding and agreement on the substantive issues involved. The more important or controversial an Estimate, the more essential these substantive matters become -- which brings us to the specific case of SNIE 11-15: "Soviet Naval Policies and Programs." You know even better than I how important this Estimate is, how controversial it is likely to be and (not coincidentally) how many strong institutional equities (including ones well outside the Intelligence Community) will inevitably be affected, one way or another, by its conclusions.

On this particular Estimate, the DCI has a double degree of personal responsibility -- the generic responsibility he has for all Estimates augmented by the fact that he has been directly and personally charged by the President to ensure that this Estimate is thorough, comprehensive, professional and objective. Given the issues it involves and the context within which this Estimate

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is being written, it must not only be objective but must also be free of any appearance of bias or special pleading. Actually -- with your much appreciated help and counsel -- we have laid the groundwork for this paper very carefully: appointing as the Conventional Forces NIO, who will handle this Estimate, an active duty U.S. Navy Flag officer with a background of intelligence experience and line combat command and by having the drafting done by DIA officers. Among other reasons, these steps were taken to ensure that there are no valid grounds for challenging the professional knowledge and background of those writing this Estimate or supervising its production or for imputing to it any civilian, especially CIA, bias. (Incidentally, I was a trifle surprised when I learned that [] was the one chosen by DIA to be the principal drafter and almost called you to ask if, despite John's undoubted abilities, it was cosmetically desirable to give this task to a civilian recently acquired from CIA. I did not call because I wanted to lean over backwards to avoid any hint of interference in DIA's internal selection process.) At the same time, it is particularly necessary to ensure that this Estimate, from inception to final formal issuance (almost certainly with some dissents), remains under the control of the DCI or his designated representatives, both because of his (in this case) explicit personal responsibility and because of the need to avoid providing any basis for imputing special pleading from the military side of the spectrum.

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This brings us to [] and what he is trying to do -- which involves nothing more (or less) than endeavoring to execute the DCI's express instructions. Bill made it very clear to Dan that he (the DCI) expected Dan to take responsibility for NIE 11-15, in effect supervising execution of the task levied on the DCI by the President. Dan certainly has no desire or intention to infringe on anyone's institutional equities or internal command authorities; if his language or actions have given any contrary impressions, those impressions were inadvertantly conveyed. This given, however, he obviously considers it essential -- just as you or I would were either of us in his position -- to be involved at all stages of this Estimate's production and to work closely with its drafters, reviewing their work (and, where necessary, guiding it) from start to finish. Dan may have inadvertantly used words which may have been misconstrued. If so, he and I will try to resolve any misunderstandings during our lunch with General [] I assure you Dan's intention is solely that of carrying out a concept I think you and I both understand, and hope we both endorse.

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If this new system for producing national intelligence, particularly National Intelligence Estimates, is to work and achieve its goal of improving substantive Community integration, I will need a great deal of support and understanding from many people, especially the Directors of DIA, NSA and INR. Of these, your support is particularly important; since if Bill Colby's hopes and plans are to bear fruit, it is essential that we work in close, cooperative harmony with the military intelligence community of which you are the head. For this degree of essential cooperation to be possible, you and I (and the DCI) will have to keep our lines of private communication completely open and try to stay on the same wave length. I think we are now thinking in tandem and need to know, frankly, if we are not. Though we may and probably will differ on points of detail from time to time, we are both working toward the same goals. The degree of unstinting and much appreciated support I have always received from you and your colleagues in DIA was one of the things that made me willing to tackle this new assignment when the DCI first asked me to take it on.

Sincerely yours,

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George A. Carver, Jr.

Deputy for National Intelligence Officers

O/D/DCI/NIO:GACarver/mee

Distribution

Orig - Addressee (hand-carried by [redacted] on 18 March)

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1 - D/NIO Chrono ✓

1 - NIO/RI

1 - General Walters (Acting Director) on 22 March

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Office of the Director
of Central Intelligence



DATE: 22 March 1974

TO: The Acting Director

SUBJECT:

Attached for your private information is a note I sent to Vince de Poix for two reasons: (a) to clarify some points on which he was either legitimately confused or on which he was reversing field on matters to which he had previously agreed and, (b) to lay out my concepts and approach in writing so that if there ever should be future disagreements he will not be able to claim that he never understood my intent. I plan obviously to give a copy to the Director for his perusal after his return but do not plan any further circulation for reasons which will be obvious when you read the document.

George A. Carver, Jr.
Deputy for National Intelligence Officers

Attachment

30 MAR 1974

Buck Slip to DCI

Attached for your information is a lengthy memorandum I sent to Admiral de Poix while you were travelling. As you will see, it is written as a private note from me to him. It was sent for two reasons: (a) to clarify some points on which he was either legitimately confused or on which he was reversing field on matters to which he had previously agreed and, (b) to lay out my concepts and approach in writing so that if there should be future disagreements he will not be able to claim that he never understood our intent.

I have shown a copy of this note to General Walters. I do not plan any further distribution. If you should think further distribution desirable, I would like to revise the first full paragraph on page 9 (for reasons which will be obvious when you read it) before anyone else sees this document.

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